Chapter 8
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In accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) (42 *United States Code* §4321 *et seq.)* requirements, this section discusses the relationship between local short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity. It also examines long-term adverse cumulative impacts, with a focus on impacts that may narrow the range of options for future use. Potential impacts of the alternatives at the candidate sites are discussed in Chapter 5, and cumulative impacts are identified in Chapter 6. The use of land on any of the candidate sites for new programmatic-decision facilities would not affect the long-term productivity adversely since these facilities would all be constructed on disturbed land. In fact, since the new facilities would be technologically more advanced, they would be less polluting and generate less waste, thereby reducing the future need for use of additional land for the disposal of radiological and hazardous materials. At the same time, such facilities represent long-term research and development (R&D) and production functions compatible with historic nuclear weapons support.

Several of the project-specific alternatives could require the construction of new facilities at Nevada Test Site (NTS). These proposed facilities could compromise long-term habitat productivity. The range of the endangered desert tortoise lies in the southern third of NTS. Construction and operation of facilities associated with Flight Test Operations or Environmental Test Facilities have the potential to impact the habitat of the Federal-listed threatened desert tortoise. Measures designed to avoid impacts to the desert tortoise from previous projects at NTS have been implemented with mitigation measures developed in consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). These measures have proven to be effective. In addition, long-term effects are especially delicate at facilities located in the western United States such as Sandia National Laboratories (SNL), Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL), and NTS, where biological communities recover very slowly from disturbances, and are particularly susceptible to soil erosion.

Losses of other terrestrial and aquatic habitat from natural productivity to accommodate new facilities and temporary disturbances required during construction are possible. Land clearing and construction activities resulting in large numbers of personnel and equipment moving about an area would disperse wildlife and temporarily eliminate habitat. Although some destruction would be inevitable during and after construction, these losses would be minimized by selection and through environmental reviews at the site-specific level. In addition, short-term disturbances of previously undisturbed biological habitat from the construction of new facilities could cause long-term reductions in the biological productivity of an area.

Potential termination of nuclear weapons activities at the Tonopah Test Range (TTR), Pantex Plant (Pantex) or Y-12 National Security Complex (Y-12) as well as reduced operations at other sites offer the possibility of restoring existing facilities at these sites to other purposes. Environmental restoration activities could have minor or short-term impacts similar to those

normally associated with construction activities such as habitat disturbance and soil erosion. If contaminated structures were removed and site areas restored to a natural state, these areas could provide improved but not pristine conditions for the long-term.